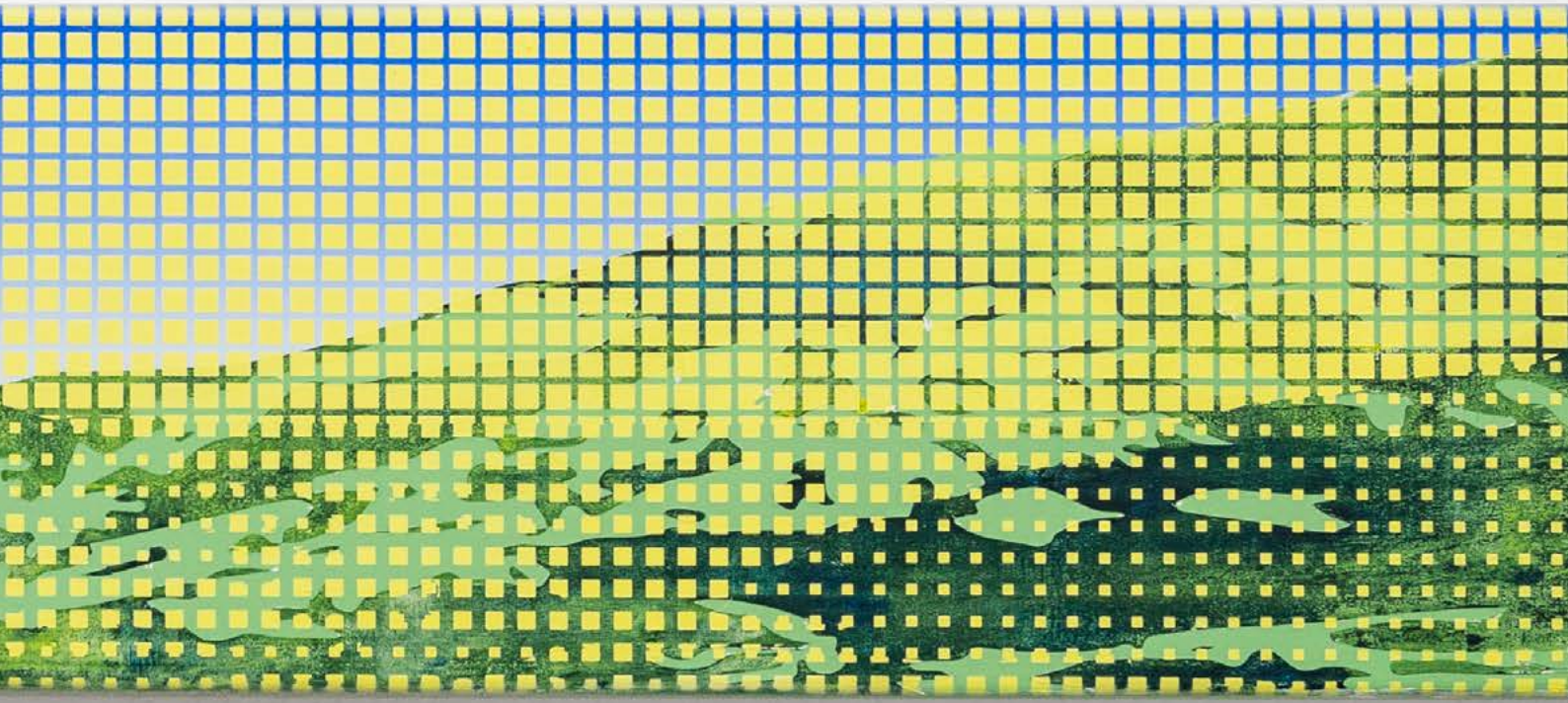
URIEL SCHMID TÉLLEZ

INSTALLATION VIEW

CATALOG

2025



TEXTS BY

BENIAMINO STOPPANI

EZRA DEDALUS

ISBN 978-2-8399-4850-0

cover image

Intersections (A.M.)

2025, oil on canvas, 20 x 100 cm

Uriel Schmid Téllez
Installation view
Catalog
2025

Works
Uriel Schmid Téllez

Texts
Beniamino Stoppani
Ezra Dedalus
Uriel Schmid Téllez

Photo credits
Uriel Schmid Téllez (pp. 4-29)
Riccardo Giancola (pp. 30-41)

Printed
Laboratorio Laser, Fondazione Diamante
Via G. Bagutti 3, 6900 Lugano

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ISBN
978-2-8399-4850-0

The book was presented at the finissage of “Exhibitionism” on Sunday, October 26, 2025.

This catalog was produced with the support of the DSS Youth Office.

The “Installation view” series was supported:
in its creation by the DSS Youth Office;
for the “Feedback” exhibition by the Weak Ends Foundation and the City of Lugano;
for the “Exhibitionism” exhibition by the Municipality of Breggia;
and for its conception by Migros Percento Cultura.

Città di Lugano

Ufficio dei giovani
DSS

MIGROS
Culture Percentage

Fondazione Weak Ends

Comune
di Breggia

Uriel Schmid Téllez

Uriel Schmid-Téllez (Lugano, 1995) is an independent artist and researcher of Swiss-Mexican nationality. He studied painting (BA) and visual arts (MA) at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna.

Since 2015 he has exhibited his work in institutional contexts (m.a.x. museum, Chiasso; Fondazione Carisbo, Bologna); in off spaces (Spazio L'Ove, Lugano; Casa Azul, Gordola; TIST, Bologna); and has been awarded prizes in various competitions (including the Trento Art Festival [IT] and Stanze dell'arte [CH]).

His painting practice analyzes the relationship between practice and theory, project and chance, code and communication, culture and nature; and, through a careful construction of chromatic techniques, investigates the boundary between the artificial and the arbitrary.

For several years, he has been conducting aesthetic, analytical, and linguistic research on color, which he promotes in conferences and publications (DJS, Digital Journal of Science, Texas; AND, Architecture and Design, Florence; GUP, Genova University Press, Genoa; GDC, Associazione Italiana Colore). His chromatic investigation focuses on the relationship between color systems, science, media studies, and art history, with the aim of laying the foundations for contemporary chromatic harmony in line with the latest discoveries in the field of vision.

Installation view

"Installation view" is the title of a series of paintings whose main theme is the representation of exhibition venues: museums, galleries, fairs, but also studio visits and other conventions of the art world. Through an articulation of the image between mechanical discretization and pictorial-gestural continuity, various plant elements and geometric motifs intersect with the representations in a stratification of screens, overlapping silhouettes, and logical-geometric ambiguities, which multiply in a vision capable of including multiple representations in a meta-pictorial and site-specific form, hence the title "Installation view."

Catalog

Complete documentation of the series of paintings “Installation view” by Uriel Schmid Téllez, created in 2025, in two exhibitions held in the same year: ‘Exhibitionism’ and “Feedback.”

Photo credits

Uriel Schmid Téllez	pp. 4-29
Riccardo Giancola	pp. 30-41

Texts

The images are complemented by a critical essay by Beniamino Stoppani with titles by Ezra Dedalus.

The appendix includes an interview by Lucrezia Fontanelli on the occasion of the “Exhibitionism” exhibition.

pp. 4-29

Exhibitionism

solo show by Uriel Schmid Téllez

19.09 — 26.10.2025

Galleria Arte SiA! di Räto Bachmann, Locarno

curated by Pietro Giovannoli

with texts by Beniamino Stoppani and Ezra Dedalus

Exhibitionism visually investigates the socio-aesthetic conventions of the art world through the use of visual tautologies and meta-representational references. The project comes from some thoughts on Uriel Schmid Téllez’s new series of large-scale paintings, currently in progress and titled “Installation view,” in which the representation of spaces linked to the art world coincides with a reference to specific exhibition conventions, in a self-reflective and meta-pictorial extreme that echoes the exacerbation of pictorial levels, chromatic digressions, and figurative multiplications.

pp. 30-41

Feedback

duo show by Uriel Schmid Téllez and Elia Varini

04.04 — 19.04.2025

Spazio L’Ove, Lugano

with a performance by Sara Ofelia Sonderegger

with a text by Uriel Schmid Téllez

The works of Elia Varini and Uriel Schmid Téllez, radically opposed in practice and results, both find in color a synergistic device capable of opening painting to a dialogue with space made up of rebounds, reflections, multiplications, and mirroring.

By emphasizing color, both artists move away from the representation to focus on the structural, perceptual, and sensory aspects of vision. Or, from a more formal point of view, both use a splitting of pictorial levels: through the multiplication of jute canvases installed on the roof in Varini’s case, and through overlaps of textural patterns in Schmid-Téllez’s works. Among these elements, however, a shared interest beyond the canvas is particularly important: both Varini and Schmid-Téllez seek a return from space: feedback.

Installation view (ART FAIR)
2025, oil on canvas, 140 x 180 cm

Exhibitionism® (Exercises_of_Expertise.exe)

Beniamino Stoppani
with 20 slogan-titles di Ezra Dedalus

IS THE SUN COLORLESS? / ICE TEA DRIP & THE NEW HYPE (VISIONS OF TREMENTINA)

The work of Uriel Schmid Téllez (1995) represents something unique and surprising in the contemporary Swiss art scene, and probably beyond, for a number of reasons. It immediately stands out for two distinctive features: the highly structured organization of the compositions and the use of a very personal color palette that, for convenience, we could define as "anti-naturalistic" and which, despite its apparent break with tradition, follows a long and prolific line of experimentation (Masaccio, Fra Angelico, Pontormo, El Greco, Bosch, Turner, Marc, Panter).

LEVEL 0: THE NAKED CANVAS – THE GHOSTS OF LIGHT. SPECTROGRAPHIES AFTER G.D.
PALETTE, SPREZZATURE, 0: PINAKOTHEK, TECHNO TECHNÉ

Téllez's approach to color, the true common thread running through his entire body of work, is a practical and analytical operation, although in reality it is conducted in an almost entirely experimental and empirical manner (Gauguin, De Kooning, Panter). This reflection, central to his work, is conducted through an only apparent opposition to the structuralist view of color. Téllez's palette is particularly broad.

This richness (or variety) is achieved not so much through the accumulation of colors used (a palette that is in any case always more than quadrichrome, almost never including primaries) but through their modulation in almost infinite shades or intensities, the application of which allows the artist to display remarkable technical virtuosity. This scaling dimension is enriched and altered by additional graphic-architectural levels: Téllez's pictorial field is organized and defined not only by iconic-compositional elements, but also by the application of multiple grids and overlapping planes. A sort of algebraic score of cuts and nuances: functions, rules, exceptions, and singularities, processes of subtraction, addition, and multiplication.

THE CAVE AND THE GALLERY (PLATO 3D). DIE WELT IST DIE GESAMTHEIT DER TATSACHEN, NICHT DER DINGE

From his earliest works, Téllez has represented a reality that is primarily ideal and optical—it does not matter here whether the eye or color came first, or even how objective our chromatic perceptions are (... "Do you see the dress as blue

or gold?" "I'm telling you, she was wearing a black jacket!"). The interest in things – transformed into surfaces, added to (or confused with) other surfaces – refers to a "quantum" principle. The (apparent) schematism of the mix of levels is a practical attempt to systematize a diachronic idea of vision as a journey, a cyclical and disordered movement, modifiable at every turn. One plus one (three or more) images in a painting, entangled. The recreation of spaces is demanded of the viewer: an eco-Barthesian invitation to read, to reread (something, in short, that belongs to everyone).

MILLE PLATEAUX: IMAGINES THAT YOU CAN'T COMPLETELY POSSESS.
FLAT/PLANE DIALECTIC (14% KOONS, 7% RICHTER, 19% POLKE)

These combinatorial tricks have very specific functions. First and foremost, interference enriches the density and depth of the painting and its decomposition into backgrounds, increasing the possibility of chromatic or luminous harmonies and tensions; secondly, it breaks up and 'slows down' its enjoyment, forcing the viewer to move, as in a landscape, across the surface (or surfaces) in a sort of changing space (similar, in nature, to the textures of many Swiss public transport fabrics, or to a certain cubo-futurism), to be decompressed. Slow motion of the gaze that clings, slips, wanders, and loses itself in possibilities, approaching drawing and musical improvisation. Thus, while on the one hand this device requires a diachronic exploration of spaces (dérapage or recalculation, yet another level that amplifies the already Renaissance discourse of emulating sculpture), on the other hand it ignites the painting, folds and unfolds it infinitely, charging it with potential energy.

AUTOREFERENTIALITY. TAUTOGRAMS (THE PAINTINGS INSIDE THE PAINTING)
FULL COLOUR WUNDERKAMMER! – WATERMARK DEDALUS

These diachronic environments joyfully and ironically oppose the idea of the white cube (aseptic places in which the work, made central and "magnified" by the surrounding emptiness, is idolized), mocking the chromatic austerity of boring painting and proposing, on the contrary, navigable, "playable" territories (La Tebaide, Hockney, Uccello, Salvo, Sonny Rollins), which are in any case labyrinthine (as they are similar to the pictorial representations of Wunderkammer from the late 17th century, with their open doors and their dizzying, if not illusory, perspectives: museums of mirrors, camouflages, pareidolic montages, games of representation and rendering). Exhibition spaces that are created by the works themselves and that include copies of works. A self-reflective and meta-representative language: mise en abyme of the perspective principle and of painting as painting. Canvases that in some cases explicitly dialogued with the (real) exhibition space (site-specific works) in a sort of feedback effect. Paintings with pedestals and paintings with paintings inside them, painting-screens, painting-rooms, painting-windows. Paintings with flowers, and with painted flowers.

PLATONIC PLASTICS. THE CONCEPT, THE RENDERING / A PAINTING IN HELVETICA (EVERY YOUTH IS MARKED BY CRUELTY); THE USE OF CRAYONS IN DENTAL SURGERIES

A technical and compositional study of physical issues that becomes a subject of thought and inspiration: lens and map. Work as a designer (Antonello da Messina on acid, De Stijl), architect-programmer or 3D graphic designer, but also as a chemist (or alchemist), empirical explorer (the response of light on pigment X with an n-1 dilution, syntheses and semi-transparencies, the combination of two para-primaries with different intensities, etc.). The screen printing of DIY art editions (Seurat and Hirst together with Lichtenstein) and the 'scientific' application of oil paint (which rivals the Como masters of the last century and a long history of tempera 'artisans') as a model for flawless, maniacally precise, almost mechanical execution. The Elvis of Colors, perhaps. In any case, meticulous work, but not sterile or an end in itself.

THE SKY IS ALSO AN IDEA (THE PAINTING IS FIRST OF ALL AN OBJECT / EVERY SURFACE HAS ITS DEPTHS)

Téllez's recent works immediately stand out as rigorously designed and executed with precision and mastery: their exquisite formality is certainly one of their most immediately recognizable features. Not only is it a defined, precise, solid, identifiable language, understood as skillful branding (How to Enter the Art Market vs. Exit through the Gift Shop) or as elegant ("balanced," sexy, the dumbest would say) design work, but also a sort of authentic code, an organism with its own rules and exceptions. Environment and system.

Installation view (No.1 GREEN STREET)

2025, oil on canvas, 180 x 140 cm

Installation view (EGOCENTRICO)
2025, oil on canvas, 140 x 180 cm

PIED BEAUTY b/w FIELD RECORDINGS (C. MAGNETIC FIELD + THE ALCHEMY OF THE OIL AEROSOL) / MADAMA BUTTERFLY & THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

The work linked to the aesthetic and functional value of the color spectrum focuses on the relationships it establishes within the compositional space, understood as a continuous field, with its relationships of balance, rhythm, and strength (balancing intensities, working on the black and white components of painting; optical and physical relationships and reactions of colors and pigments). The desired effect is, in fact, as in mosaics, that of the whole. A highly organized and interconnected field, conceptually similar to the uniqueness of a flowery grassland (or an MS Dos MineSweeper screen). Chaosmos, immobile engine. A persistently off-center system, consisting of potential n inputs and n outputs, but in perfect harmony (ex-stasis, Ukiyo-e).

AGAINST THE WHITE WALL (THE STATE OF AFFAIRS): BOOGIE WOOGIE MOLINO NUOVO 3.44 AM

Architectural surfaces (walls and floors) are a fundamental element in many of Téllez's works: they define Euclidean space, they cut through the vision and split the light, regulating it. These ordered, orthonomous values are then complemented by curved lines, the presence (or suggestion) of diagonal lines, and by other cuts. On the walls, we find pictures of walls with Téllez's paintings hanging on them, represented in slight anamorphosis. Biological life seems almost absent: plants are always at least (and above all) representations of themselves, some plants are simplified to the point of becoming architectural structures, and some flowers look like splashes. Man is banished from a garden that thus becomes a theater without an interior scene, apparently lifeless ("This is a house not a home": Beckett, Lynch, De Chirico). However, there is (almost) never a truly white wall. Walls and canvases merge (Cordoba, Neapolitan tiles), the space is inlaid, engraved, perforated (Abu Dhabi — Jean Nouvel). Every wall is also a screen, a window, a projection. Every wall is broken through or crossed by other planes: one window emerges from another (a reflection?), but it is only for a moment, then the eye is drawn back to the surface. A moving schedule, reflected on the pond (Escher). Frame-like works, which in fact do not include frames (but which contain them internally, either structurally or thematically). Screens, windows. And it is no coincidence that the only colors present in the large canvas depicting a library or an office, grayish, appear beyond the curtains of large windows, through which the wind enters and through which dogs barking and children shouting can be heard. A call from elsewhere, simultaneously inside and outside the painting.

POVS AND PROJECTIONS. DESOLATE GALLERY (LE VERNISSAGE VIDE)

In this direction of research, we can therefore probably interpret the accumulation of planes, not exactly mimetic, in "naturalistic" representations: works united by the intersection of numerous mountain diagonals on water mirrors, in a self-reflective game in which the discourse on painting—on its limits and possibilities—finds an analogue in the image of the theater and its wings. A similar effect is also achieved through

the megalomaniacal increase in surface area obtained from the perspective view of interiors with complex structures (Suprematism, Flavin, Sant'Elia), characterized by different types of systems (columns, lintels, jambs, windows; portals, not doors, etc.) which – in addition to allowing for the display of a certain compositional skill (aimed at a playful dimension, always on the cusp of kitsch, on that knife edge between baroque and neoclassical) and foreshadowing complex electronic computational work – corresponds to an increase in discrete elements that reveals the 'exact' construction of the point of view and the artificiality (the 'constructed' nature) of these uninhabited places. Photomechanical objectivity of the perspective rendering, but not pure technicality for its own sake: rather, a process of elaborating a compositional-content work that makes form its ring, a stage for prestige, for poetry.

ACCURATE. ABSOLUTELY BRUTAL (LOOS/SPEER): INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE BOX (THE REVERTED WHITE CUBE)

Thanks to the predominant use of centered frontal perspective—preferred to the isometry applied in previous works, from which the author developed some ideas on the application of orthogonal projections (Lotto, Giorgione, Savoldo, Warhol) – the interiors of the "Installation views" represent spaces hosting works (some represented frontally) in a minimalist style tending towards technical drawing, halfway between that of Swiss paper money and IKEA instructions (Bauhaus, Eames, Alberti), but in delicately lysergic colors. Exhibitions of paintings (from which the viewer is excluded, but which the eye can still partially explore); exhibitions of paintings of paintings, of images/ideas of paintings, which become windows onto other spaces (Magritte, Pistoletto, Johns). These openings are analogous to recent three-dimensional works (hypercubic parallelepipeds) because, as "outer sides," they refer to introverted spaces, boxes, and, paradoxically, even display cases/windows. There is certainly Bacon (a clear model for the young Téllez, later partly abandoned), his blurred boxes of cruelty, his anatomy tables (similar in some ways to Koons' display cases), but also Vermeer (more than Hopper), or Leonardo (The Last Supper), the orthogonal tatami mats of certain Japanese erotic prints, Mondrian and the vertigo of Piranesi's prisons, Adami, Van Gogh, the FAC, the inner courtyard in Piero della Francesca's Flagellation. Truly symbolic-expository spaces, in some ways foundational. The computer graphics of early 2000s video games (the Windows 98 screensaver with the maze) and 8-bit retro computer art combined with Renaissance perspective studies; Rubik (the cube) and Kubrick's white room in the final scene of 2001 – Klee, perhaps, but then Duchampian (Cage). Téllez's art often depicts deserted and ethereal museums, uninhabited landscapes (The white, the void, Klein – evoked in a painting – Morandi). There is also, clearly, a reference to a certain cybernetic graphic style (Are we living in a computer simulation?) due to its humanistic metaphysicality (the ideal city, or installation view of the well-tempered vernissage). Undoubtedly pop on the one hand (mockarchitectures?), but certainly not in other respects. A great philosophical mess (Picasso). Cezanne, Carrà, Picabia-Wolf3D, Archie Shepp, James Joyce. Painting as a mandala, as a prayer, as a starry sky.

FOREGROUND DEFRAG CARTOGRAPHY. RECURSIVE NOISE ELEMENTS (REGLES, RHYTME). MODULES/MOSAICS; PLOT TWISTS CODES

A clearly identifiable feature of Téllez's graphic-figurative device is the use of overlapping or interconnected textures (the magic eye and anaglyphs, lenticular postcards, hieroglyph-like symbols on fogged-up windows and streetlights, curtain patterns, torn posters). White drawings of clouds and blue skies. The forms of recursive elements (decorative or disruptive) form a system: they are first and foremost the result of a process of elaboration (interpolation and mutation) taken to its extreme. Multidimensional tangrams. Generative patterns (snippets) and textures as decoded norms: rhythmic scores (a value n modifies the value of x, y, z). A machine that creates paths and readings: new cuts, refrains, shortcuts, bifurcations. Devices for reproduction-reduction, refraction. The joy of permutations. A structure similar to free jazz, partly inscribed in techno music, in the architecture of objective, pre-set patterns, and therefore already written.

THE WEIGHT AND VOLUME OF LIGHT (INTENSIVE/EXTENSIVE). PHILATELIC BLOTTER ART

Thus, it may happen that some imprinted patterns (overprinted or watermarked), such as the rectangular ones in medium-format panoramic canvases, sometimes confuse the representation, acting as distractions, or, alternatively, may even acquire their own "semantic" value (at most, even if only in terms of spatial coordinates). Especially in landscapes, some grids seem to suggest a dialectic of force fields, expressing — in an almost vectorial way — gradients of intensity and, thanks to this, representing, with new signs of modulation, the "physicality" of luminous phenomena on (and through) matter.

TAPESTRIES, CAMOUFLAGES, PASTICHES E MARBLES (THE ACT OF PAINTING; IMPORT/EXPORT)

The pure interferences (i.e., those that are completely asemantic) still have a "theoretical" meaning (linked to the divisionist approach and the history of the avant-garde movements), but they also suggest a "symbolic" meaning. Firstly, similar to certain flowers (especially those painted with a dry brush) and faux marble, they emphasize the pictorial aspect, the optical and physical discourse, so to speak. They ensure further fragmentation of details and also represent a form of ornamentation. As in a sort of Network Action (Sistine Chapel), space becomes "mimetic" (Rohlfs, Kusama, Pollock, Boetti, Scharpf), poietic. Faux Marbres, ipno-nuances, etc.

SCHROEDINGER's SWIMMING POOL: THE MAP IS INSIDE

The subjects selected by Téllez are relatively varied, but can be divided into two groups: natural and cultural elements. They range from representations of landscapes or macroscopic details to highly anthropic images: interiors, often exhibition spaces, works of art, etc. In almost all of them, the element of water appears: vapors, splashes, spatters, patches, waves (Hokusai, Hockney, Dalì Atomicus) – all situations in which the presence of light is always fundamental. The biological (foliage) or water element – both approached through fluid

Installation view (IN AND OUT)
2025, oil on canvas, 180 x 140 cm

Installation view (EMERGENT ARTIST – Less is more: Darei via tutto per avere di più)

2025, oil on canvas, 140 x 180 cm

dynamics applications – formally mixes with light (shadows, patches, reflections). Often this level of stylization, similar to that of patterns and geometric tessellations, is superimposed on a more realistic representation of spaces or objects, making it difficult to read 'cleanly' and immediately, and producing further clusters of information that alter those around them. It is a poiesis of deterministic chaos that is subject to rather rigid rules: the application of cuts, streaking effects, digital processing, rasterization, and vectorization (all recursive and modifiable processes). In short, it is a device that must be calibrated gradually; this process is sometimes taken to an extreme (breaking point) where the drawing dissolves into pure painting and the representation tends towards the abstract.

SPACE IS THE PLACE (COLD WARS, FRESH ECAL DROPOUT). … VAN GOGH, WATERLOO, VERTIGO
IDEALISTIC: LIGHTS AND TIME > KALEIDOSCOPIC HARLEQUIN (CHAMELEON)

It is no coincidence that, by continuing to emphasize "painting" at the expense of "drawing," contour lines are almost entirely absent. The iconographic subjects, probably chosen precisely because of their relationship with space, are primarily — when not surfaces or silhouettes (similar to scenic elements) — images of illuminated bodies. Téllez's painting is therefore first and foremost a painting of light and volume. If Téllez's painting is based on values of contrast and the relationship with light (painted or real), then it is light alone that moves in these desolate spaces, environments apparently flattened by mapping, by the cruel objectivity of technical drawing (of the matrix) – to give them back, by inhabiting them, a form of fullness.

STROBO HANA BI (MATISSE PINK WORK) – OMBRES STEREOPHONIQUES

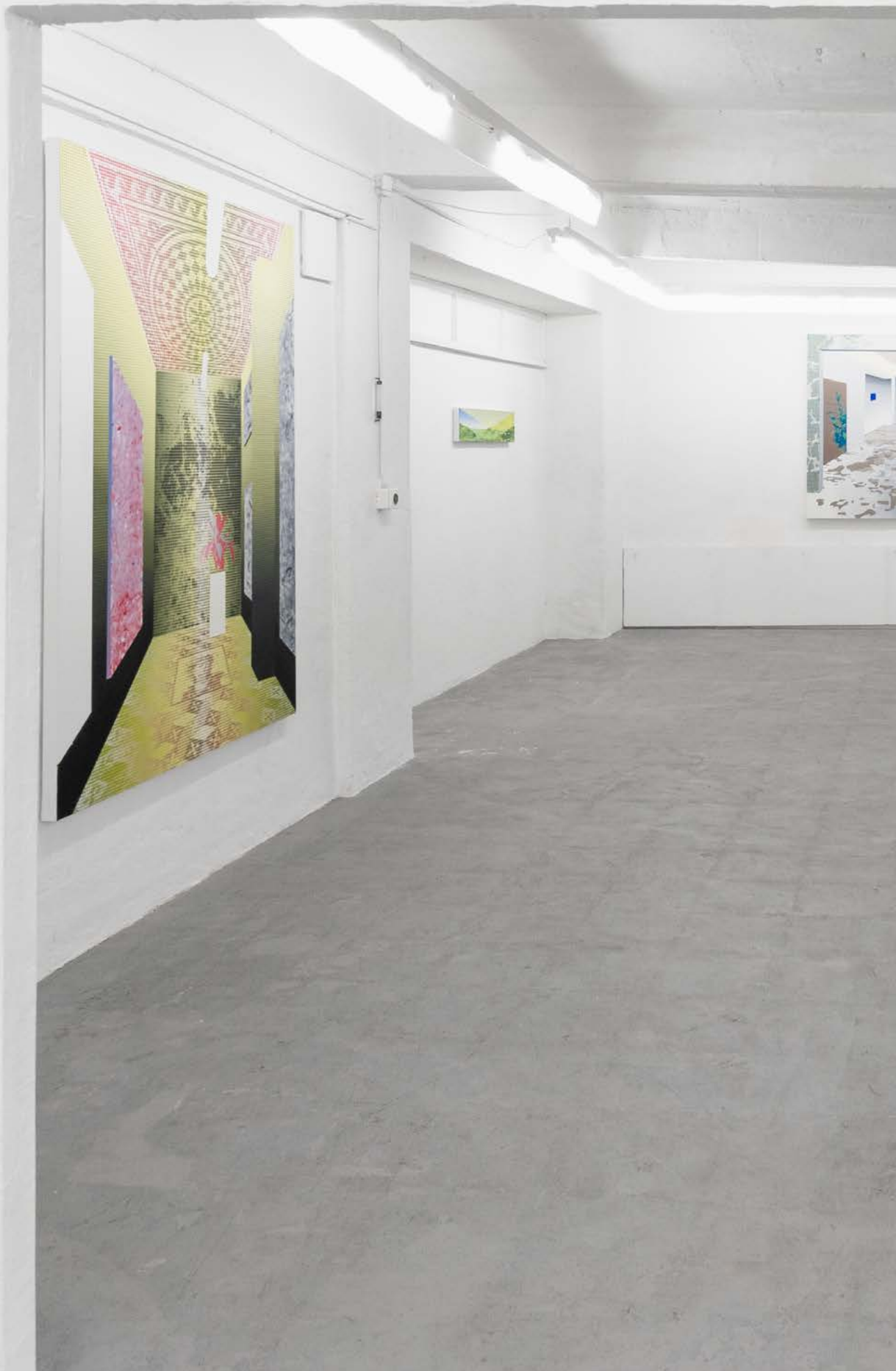
In Téllez's oils, natural space and human dimensions tend to merge: the floors of his interiors are maculated by impressionistic shadows (Amiet, Bonnard) that are highly unnatural (blots, stains, taches); irregular shapes reminiscent of the plant world emerge through patchy openings, grilles, and windows; in his canvas sculptures (canvas cases) liquid, mineral, or biological structures, halos, and Magnus effects (gyroscopes, propagation of centrifugal wave motions) are represented. As far as the presence of flora is concerned, Téllez prefers symbolic plants (the palm tree) and symbols of plants (the Flower); he approaches the plant as a natural element (structure, differences and repetitions, reproducibility) and a symbolic-decorative element (reducibility). The plant-idea and the plant-object (potpourri, the bouquet as a cultural process: still life, nature vs. culture, discrete vs. continuous, gift as ritual, symbolic waste and demonstration of strength). Flowers have been a frequent subject for Téllez since his youth, at least since a series of acrylics with flowering cactus in 2010; palm trees are a topos (Poussin, Hayez, Pissarro, Monet, Renoir, Munch, Seargent, Picasso, Church, Winslow) that he has appropriated more recently. A biblical symbol (Giotto), already present in Roman mosaics (associated with the peacock). Palm tree-column, palm tree-sculpture, and palm tree-cross (on early Christian sarcophagi, in Mycenaean texts, etc.), plant-flower (Blechen, Blossfeldt), fountain, and firework (flower-volcano). Palm tree once local (Mesozoic) then

Installation view («Lo stile è eterno»: Friedrich Nietzsche / Yves Saint Laurent)
2025, oil on canvas, (2x) 70 x100; (1x) 100 x 100 cm

invasive and now endemic, Ticino and post-exotic (Gauguin, Monet, Giannini), late colonial tourism (Sonnenstube). But also a postcard image, beyond kitsch (Ruscha, Schifano, Doig), ultra-charged and therefore semantically emptied: form, ghost, tracing, découpage, silhouette. The same applies to plants, arborescent plant structures. In the (fake) temple, the vase could contain a jade-like plant, or cheap plastic. The pedestal, the altar, is the place for an ideal plant. It summons a plant. ...Denial of nature? Not always. Cellular structures appear in the grids, in the sub-webs. Each room is also an interior garden.

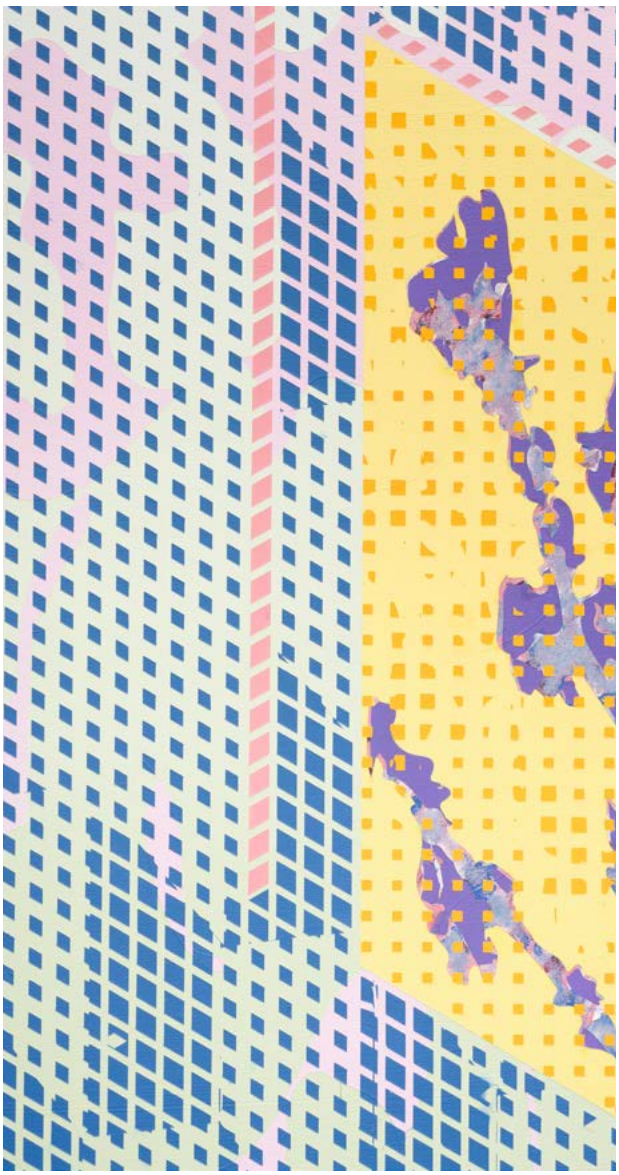
ROOMS OF ART. THE MYSTERY OF THE LOCKED ROOM OR: THE ANTIPATHOSFORMELN? (THE EMPTY TOMB AND THE BEYOND)

It is impossible not to dwell on galleries and museums in Téllez, ambivalently poised between physical places and symbolic spaces. The painter's supposed coldness (vaporwave, geek aesthetics, cool freshness, yuppie no wave) is only apparent (Le Grand Verre, Stella, Lewitt, Wittgenstein). The "Swiss" rigor of his paintings and the "low" subjects, ambiguously always on the borderline of apparent nihilism, reduced to ideas (Plato and rendering: every form of meaning), to images of things (meta-), to pigments distributed on the canvas, is only a starting point, one rule among others in the treasure hunt. One might then think that the figurative direction, as well as the individual iconographic choices, is another matter or even an accidental necessity. It is probably also wrong to believe in a real social critique, in the use of



Installation view (STUDIO VISIT)
2025, oil on canvas, 140 x 180 cm

détournement. It is unsatisfactory to stop at the theoretical discourse on the meta-representation of painting and drawing, which does not explain the attraction to landscape and natural subjects, or at least the fact of investigating them only as artistic and cultural conventions. We could respond that, in Téllez's work, colors need bodies, figures, and a world in order to shine; ...that there is no free jazz jam session without a cantina. That cataloguing, orderly and sequential arrangement, is a study that precedes the creative process. The fact remains, however, that this painting also speaks to us of something that is not present in the image (Judd, Viola, Modigliani). It works not only because it is harmonious, balanced, fresh, witty (spritz), but above all because of its multiple epistemic breaks. Semi-ontological painting, which requires continuous repositioning and invites reflection. Not a dogmatically theoretical-holographic art, nor a magical materialism in the direction of surrealist paranoia: Téllez's mystery is not linked to any crime, any murder (...or to that of the artist himself? To the complete falsification of the world? – ...but this hypothesis seems limiting), to any sensational theft. Everything is in its place, everything in the light of day (You see what you get, but ...). However, there is no eschatological representation of a post-bomb scenario: there are no



rubble or ruins, but rather spaces that may never have been violated. In short, it is not archaeological art in a post-historical sense, no more so than the Black Chapel in Houston ("The painting is not dead, the painting is alive and well"). Instead, it probably aspires to offer a graphic allegory of the empty tomb (Luca 24:5-6). Indeed, there is no trace of Man, no biographical debris: the artifacts (?) hanging on the walls and the few functional pieces of furniture that occupy the scenes in Téllez's canvases could have been made by machines, or even just designed. It is therefore not a requiem for man, nor a final painting on the death of art. Art itself, in this meta-representation, appears to be of little importance (a mere distraction): a reduced version of the paintings, an icon. But, on closer inspection, Téllez's works are not copies; he does not produce simulacra: he does not reproduce, but constructs. His is an idea of harmony (spatial, volumetric), exquisitely compositional and chromatic, a medium. The medium is the medium? There is no univocal meaning.

CURTAINS±FRAMES. A MYSTICAL, METAPHYSICAL APPROACH (AFTER POLITICAL ART. A PAINTING OF THE BEYOND)

There is no form of idolatry in Téllez, not even towards nature. Painting becomes nature. Nature is bent to painting. Painting is like a mandala (O'Keefe, Redon, Richter), like a dance (Matisse, Derain, Beuys, Cage), like a prayer (Beltrametti, Gertsch). The interpretation of the painting should be understood as a journey of the gaze within its space (in & off the grid), a sort of exercise in vision and thought: the eye reconstructs the painting, remapping it in a kind of de-coding (reverse engineering). Returning to Téllez's interior (or closed) spaces, they (whether museums or boxes) are traversed by chromatic entities, energies, the appearance and disappearance of orderly structures and textures – but they are in fact uninhabited (at least by humans). Their desolation is often tangible: these spaces generally do not enjoy natural lighting (real windows are quite rare, although they are featured in a beautiful painting): they are museum-mausoleums, bunkers (Benjamin, Sontag, Virilio), spaces that are apparently inaccessible or somehow inviolate (Eden, the last room of the temple in Jerusalem). Similarly, the installations of paintings (the hypercubic bodies) are reminiscent of the ark, the tabernacle, etc. Téllez's paintings depict landscapes and natural elements (geological and biological) as well as architecture and artifacts, yet — if we exclude the mythological face depicted in a mosaic that actually exists (Holbein) — man is never present. So what is the place of man in Téllez's art? What is the artist's vision of the meaning of his creative practice in today's nihilistic context? The writer believes that, net of the analytical and only apparently cold construction, the salvific function of art is not compromised in Téllez but is, on the contrary, reinforced by these assumptions. For Téllez, it is not a question of establishing the end of art, the death of the artist (of God?): the divine hovers in absentia, in the void left between the orthogonal lines of the human, reduced ad abstractio to pure compositions, or even in the natural light of landscapes. Ideal architectures, not idealistic (Byzantine rather than Medici): initiatory and esoteric spaces. Places of contemplation and escape, veils or disguises in whose interstices one can think of a sort of other, of (even with a lowercase s) sacred. Spaces of waiting. Not a painting of the after (at most, of the before), but rather of the elsewhere.

Installation view (INSTITUTIONAL ATMOSPHERE)
2025, oil on canvas, 140 x 180 cm

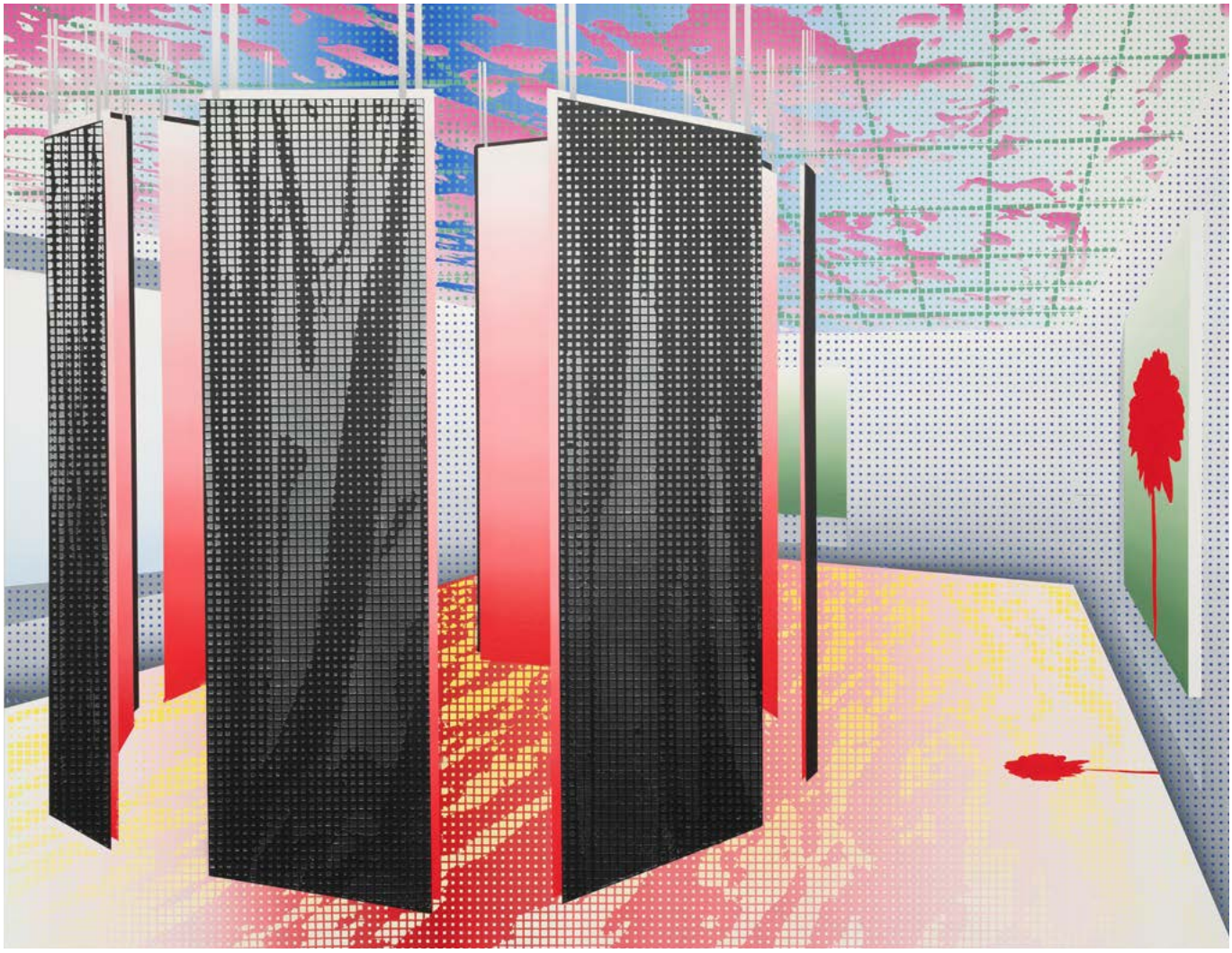
HORTUS CONCLUSUS AND EPIPHANIC SPACE (AFTER THE EXHIBITION HAS CLOSED). ECCE: INNER GARDENS ECC

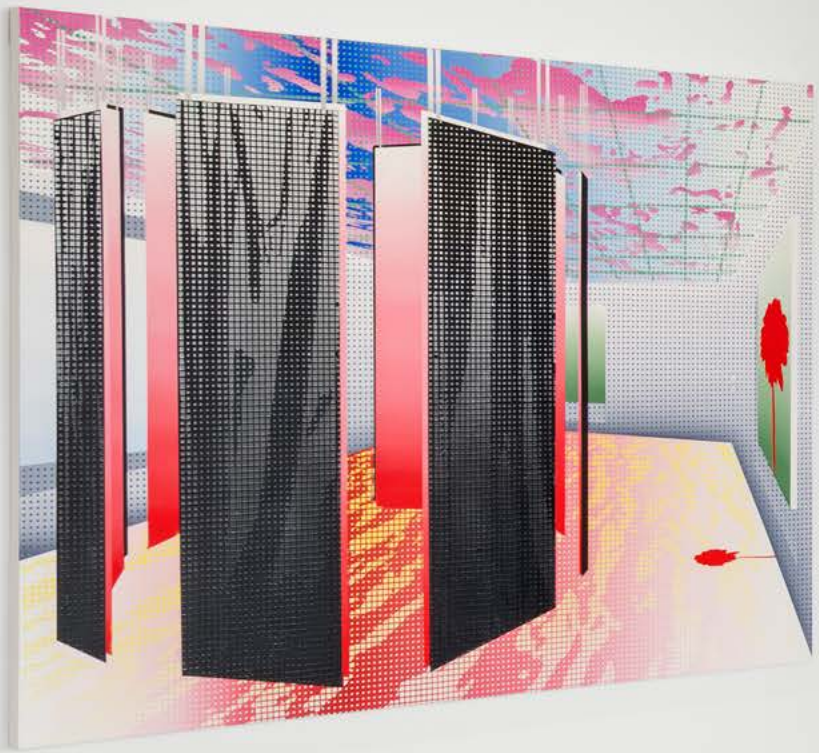
Nativity scenes are rich in corners, edges, and broken lines. The space of the Annunciation is often similar: the hall, the courtyard, the windows (in Téllez we find this aspect combined in the interior gardens). Téllez's paintings are protected places, forms of a primordial locus, utopias, parables. In this absence of man, perhaps, some form of sacredness, music (or silence) can manifest itself. An indeterminate and proteiform dimension, telescope and microscope: volume (and time) destined for waiting, an interstice of contemplation. Téllez's works question us so powerfully because, through their complex construction (and starting from it), they offer an invitation to go beyond ("Mehr Licht"). His paintings develop a sort of epiphanic antechamber.

© Beniamino Stoppani & Ezra Dedalus, September 2025.

"These paintings require much more light (specifically designed) and air than others. Let Téllez's canvases breathe!" (James Dylan Ray).

Installation view (LOVE AFFAIR)
2025, oil on canvas, 140 x 180 cm





Painting. Color. Painting.
Interview with Uriel Schmid-Téllez
by Lucrezia Fontanelli

"EXHIBITIONISM" is the title of the solo exhibition, curated by Pietro Giovannoli, which opened on September 19 at Räto Bachman's ArteSiA! gallery (Via Mariani 2, 6600 Locarno) and will be open to visitors until October 26. Below is an interview with artist and independent researcher Uriel Schmid-Téllez.

For several years now, you have been conducting powerful, analytical research into color. Since your painting also explores the relationship between practice and theory, how do these two dimensions work together in Exhibitionism?

The term you use to describe my chromatic research, "powerful," makes me smile and reflect at the same time. It is, in fact, a mere aspiration for power: chromatic, linguistic, and manipulative power over color, stimulated primarily by shortcomings, by real systemic gaps in contemporary chromatic models. Honestly, I have not yet reached my ultimate goal, which is to create a new aesthetic-functional theory of color in step with the times, but in my work, many compositional and color combination choices are influenced by the extensive studies I have conducted in color science, Gestalt, and color theories for art. For the moment, I am limiting myself to experimenting, and at the same time, all my painting work is touched by this theoretical dimension, starting with the chromatic cataloging of my oil colors that I used to paint with chromatic precision (since 2014/15, I have digitally cataloged more than 400 oil mixtures), and then, in recent years, abandoning that catalog and increasingly relying on my eye. Yet this cataloguing work, together with obvious references to Western art history (such as perspective and Mondrian), determined the use of grids and the relationship between mechanical (not to say photomechanical) order and gestuality. Nevertheless, oil painting, which is very powerful chromatically, remains one of the most difficult pictorial media to manage, thus always placing me in relation to error, accident, or rather: to the inability to fully utilize photomechanical tools, always having to adopt manual and technical tactics that leave a trace of the process. It can therefore happen that my ideas clash with what I can do, or that they are influenced by a plethora of small practical tactics — by this very artisanal, archaic-primordial know-how, so to speak — and ultimately, this is where my interest in painting (and perhaps also in jazz) lies. What matters most to me is the image, not the painting, but painting is, in my opinion, that image in which, more than anything else, this primordial dimension of the brush, of the hand, so to speak, declared (in continuous and implicit reference to the human body as an instrument), despite all its imprecision compared to a cast, a print, or a photo, continues to manipulate the world to express something else, never betraying its continuous corruption. It is not only the gap with reality that somehow always remains alive in painting, but also

the gap with identical repetition. I have been greatly influenced, for example, by Deleuze's 'Difference and Repetition': 'Our modern life is such that, faced with the most mechanical, most stereotypical repetitions, inside and outside ourselves, we never cease to extract small differences, variations, modifications, variations, modifications'. Added to all this is a series of iconic references: the silhouettes in my works are the result of a wide variety of computer designs, renderings, photos, diagrams, and patterns, which in turn become digital vectorizations or rasterizations (which are already, in a way, the equivalents of theory and practice), and which can also be broken down into grids, in a continuous dialogue between simplification and complication of images. I can say that my work dialogues, within the aforementioned content, with the design image or graphic stylization that has a technical or functional function in other disciplines and formats, and all this also comes out of the frame when I construct objects through the assembly of canvases. The relationship between theory and practice thus becomes a continuous comparison that I believe also becomes content in my work, especially in the rebound between abstraction and mimesis. When I talk about the relationship between practice and theory, I am thinking, for example, of consistency and inconsistency in the use of perspectives in relation to grids; or the positioning of light or the use of colors in relation to a recognizable figurative form. The variables of color, light, and perspective applied to grids, figures, and environments produce a multitude of combinations and results. For example, small deviations from the rules used can make a work more or less abstract. In this sense, the many tricks used to achieve a certain image effect often stem from the identification of an order, a norm, and its possible deviations. When considering the history of science as a succession of paradigms (I am thinking of Kuhn's "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions"), and considering the stabilization of these paradigms as the product of the relationship between precognition and technical possibilities, I realize that my artistic method is analogous, or at least has a relationship with this idea of continuous replacement of paradigms, even in their subversion through tactics and incursions. There is a lot of calculation, a lot of strategy, but also a lot of intuition and instinct. When I work in the studio, I am lucid and hallucinated at the same time.

Your painting technique is based on fragmentation into individual squares of color that are, however, in constant communication with each other, almost like atoms held together to form increasingly complex molecules and bodies. How would you define, in your work, the relationship between continuous and discrete, between material presence and the allusion to a digital representation?

Ever since my early works, there has always been this relationship between structure and matter, which was initially motivated by more philosophical or, so to speak, metaphorical and poetic reflections. My high school thesis was entitled "Graham Sutherland and Francis Bacon: organism and matter, two phenomena of existence." Later on, however, especially while studying color — to which I dedicated my bachelor's and then master's theses at the Academy of Bologna — the structural and technological problem became increasingly important, particularly in relation to language. I am thinking, for example, of William Labov's work "The Continuous and the Discrete in Language," or Paolo Rocchi's "Logic of Analog and Digital Machines," which also shows that, in the context of the intense digitalization we are experiencing, the subject appears to be extremely neglected. My interest in these issues, beyond the linguistic problem and the technological problem related to color, also has to do with the possible theorization of harmony, since any harmonic system — as in natural language — always imposes discrete categories on a perceptual continuum. The relationship between discrete and continuous is therefore important for my work in several respects, and I believe that in all the iconographic themes of my work there is always a relationship with this dualism between discrete and continuous. It can be said without hesitation that the technical elements underlying my pictorial work are the equivalents of the extremes of this relationship: shades and monochrome squares. In this sense, however, the artistic goal is not only to obtain a series of chromatic effects that cannot be achieved otherwise, but also to "move" the image in a sort of diachronic vision, in the reading of the image on multiple levels and moments. It is a question of using analytical tools to enhance the image. Ultimately, we always come back to this desire for power; the desire to linguistically obtain the most powerful image possible, as if it were capable of doing more things. For this reason, I believe that only in a superficial view can my work be identified as a metaphorical representation of the digital. In my research, for

example, I have come across various image reproduction systems that are not digital at all, even though they feature squares, lines, or other discrete graphic systems, and these processes have certainly inspired me. Returning to the subject of power, I must say that my work would have been unthinkable—perhaps even just 10 years ago—not so much because of the technical issues involved, but rather because of the amount of technical processing required, i.e., because of the computing power that we now have increasingly easy access to. In this sense, the term digital applied to my work takes on another meaning, which no longer concerns the digital paradigm in its structural qualities, but rather concerns the idea of a modern image in the sense of current: an image that is only possible today. What I mean is that in 5-20 years (I can't say when), this relationship between the physical object and the digital paradigm will take on a completely different meaning. In fact, the grids I use have a relationship with graphics first and foremost, and only secondarily do they have a historical and technical relationship with digital progress. Shades have a similar problem: they are precise and simplified, not to mention vectorial, but this does not make them modern or digital in themselves. Let's say that all these things together evoke a certain video game aesthetic, but they might not. For example, on a project with an isometric grid, I was told that it could evoke Japanese graphics, but others thought of Western architectural drawings in isometric projection or even isometric RTS video games from the 2000s. Certainly, given the themes I deal with, I care deeply about the aesthetics of digital representations and, therefore, also and above all, video games. I am thinking, for example, of Harun Farocki's exceptional documents, "Parallel I-IV." Yet I do not actively work on this theme. The allusion to the digital world remains rightly strong, and has an important meaning in my work with regard to the themes of the discrete and the continuous, but it is also an allusion that should always be put into perspective. My cubes made of canvas, for example, may recall digital architectural renderings or Minecraft, but the problem is that both digital architectural renderings and Minecraft currently have an exaggerated digital connotation, almost as if architectural abstraction or the cube did not exist before. I am convinced that when cultural references to the relationship between analog and digital mature, and it is only a matter of time, my work will be better understood.

The exhibition features large paintings, but also some cubes composed of small canvases assembled together. How does the experience these objects offer visitors differ from that of a two-dimensional work? What additional potential do these objects offer?

Yes, there are three cubes, or rather two cubes and a rectangular parallelepiped made of canvas. I haven't decided what to call these objects yet, but they have a long history in my work. The first canvas cube I made dates back to 2019, but it was different: being composed of canvases stretched on frames with 45-degree edges, it was a cube perfectly closed on the sides, concealing the structure of the paintings. Furthermore, this first cube was designed to be closed in on itself, but also to be hung up, showing its development. All this had a specific meaning, because the painting represented a plan in a kind of orthogonal projection, in which the faces showed the various points of view of the subject. On the side canvases, however, there was only a line of color of the same height as the subject, making the subject appear (or describing it geometrically) as if it were only a silhouette. In short, these first cubes were a playful reflection on two-dimensional painting. On the other hand, the objects in this exhibition show the edge of the frame (4 cm wide), making it clear that they are assemblages of paintings, and it is unclear, or less clear, whether they are subjects painted from different points of view or collages of paintings. Some cubes feature the same plant, as variations of a species or continuations of the same subject, while others do not. Some cubes feature a continuous plant between one painting and another, while in other cases there are representations of completely different plants. These cubes also have an exhibition dimension, as they are mounted on pedestals, which allows them to dialogue with the series of paintings "Installation view," which already featured 'sculpture-plants' on pedestals in some works. It is not clear whether these cubes come out of the paintings or go into them, or at least, this was the goal, i.e., to achieve a sort of ambiguity, like 'which came first, the chicken or the egg?'. In this sense, it is the relationship with the paintings that presents great potential for me, triggering the exhibition, so to speak.
These cubes therefore stem from the idea of creating 'display case' plants, as an objective response to my paintings depicting exhibitions. This intention is linked to the use of patterns that appear like glass or water, like screens in the

sense of shields that obstruct vision but also become devices for defining the object: cuts or discretizations of the object with respect to the rest. In this case too, I liked the idea of evoking glass in an ambiguous way, showing, so to speak, an alternative effect of light propagation, in dialogue with painting. Throughout the exhibition, there are various references to this 'watery' dimension of painting, which for me represents the ability of painting to take on any form. So I incorporated patterns of spots, splashes, and splatters into the paintings. Secondly, since meta-pictorial reflection inevitably leads to reflection on art, these cubes also originated from the idea of a gift, a gift box, a container, which is why you can sense this strong decorative or design aspect. Let's say that I like the relationship between beauty and art, in the sense that I am convinced that it has a lot to do with my work. For example, I made a series of bouquets thinking precisely about this relationship with nature, this tear: this cut that ideally discretizes the continuity of nature. The bouquet is nature, yes, but it is also obviously a cultural object, and ultimately it is often also a gift, with all the logic of gift-giving linked to waste, the demonstration of power, etc.
The only human figure on display is a mosaic face, which I inserted, manipulating a grid, into the floor of a room depicted in one of the paintings in the "Installation view" series. It is a mosaic from the 2nd century AD, which was found in a popular Roman resort in Turkey, and the figure wearing a crown of flowers is believed to be Spring, the generic personification of abundance and good living. These concepts are very stimulating for me when I think about exhibition conventions or the art market.

Some works are a mise en abyme of spaces that refer to the exhibition conventions of the art world; is this a gesture of appropriation or an alienating reflection that implies a critical intent?

Both. There is criticism, but there is also artistic self-definition; there is life. It is an attempt to break something in order to make something else. I think it's quite similar to how I feel about abstraction: there can be no abstraction without figuration, but everything must be simultaneous; it's a kind of discourse on the icon. It's as if, in order to see the painting, it were necessary to break many things that would otherwise cover it. Many of the works on display belong to the "Installation view" series, which depicts exhibition spaces, including the current exhibition. All these self-references, these meta-pictorial tautologies within my work, serve to close referentiality in a vicious circle and open up to painting. In any case, I don't want to arrive at an autonomous formalism, but simply to expand every reference to a further dimension.

Can you tell us about the choice of the title Exhibitionism? What is it, ultimately, that is exhibited in your paintings? What is your relationship with shame?

"Exhibitionism," a title that came about during my first meeting with curator Pietro Giovannoli, refers to the meta-pictorial nature of the "Installation view" series, and this meta-pictorial nature is essentially the affirmation of my aesthetic investigation as a reflection on vision in the broadest possible sense. If you think about it, by meta-representing the spaces and conventions of art exhibitions, the world itself becomes painting—as I believe the assemblages of canvases on pedestals clearly indicate—making painting itself an exhibition of painting. The very act of exhibiting is thus represented as a codified act of vision, like a screen, a shield, a filter to be broken within an infinite series of self-referential references. In this exhibition, painting does not mince words; it is not autonomous "pure painting," but rather a raw, naked, and stripped-down painting. There is something sexual about all this. Let's just say that "Exhibitionism" has no shame. When I started using a mechanically cut adhesive grid (initially cut by graphic design companies and then by me with a plotter), I was asked several times: why don't you print your designs instead of painting them? I finally found an answer to this question: because it would be like watching porn instead of having sex. Following this metaphor, I believe that in contemporary art many artists are stuck at the porn stage. I am thinking of artists who, like me, use graphic forms repeated through stencils, but also of all those artists who implement printing or screen printing in their painting, while maintaining a relationship with painting and a much simpler elaboration of patterns: I try to go in the opposite direction.

Uriel Schmid Téllez
Lucrezia Fontanelli
Lugano — Bologna, 19.10.2025

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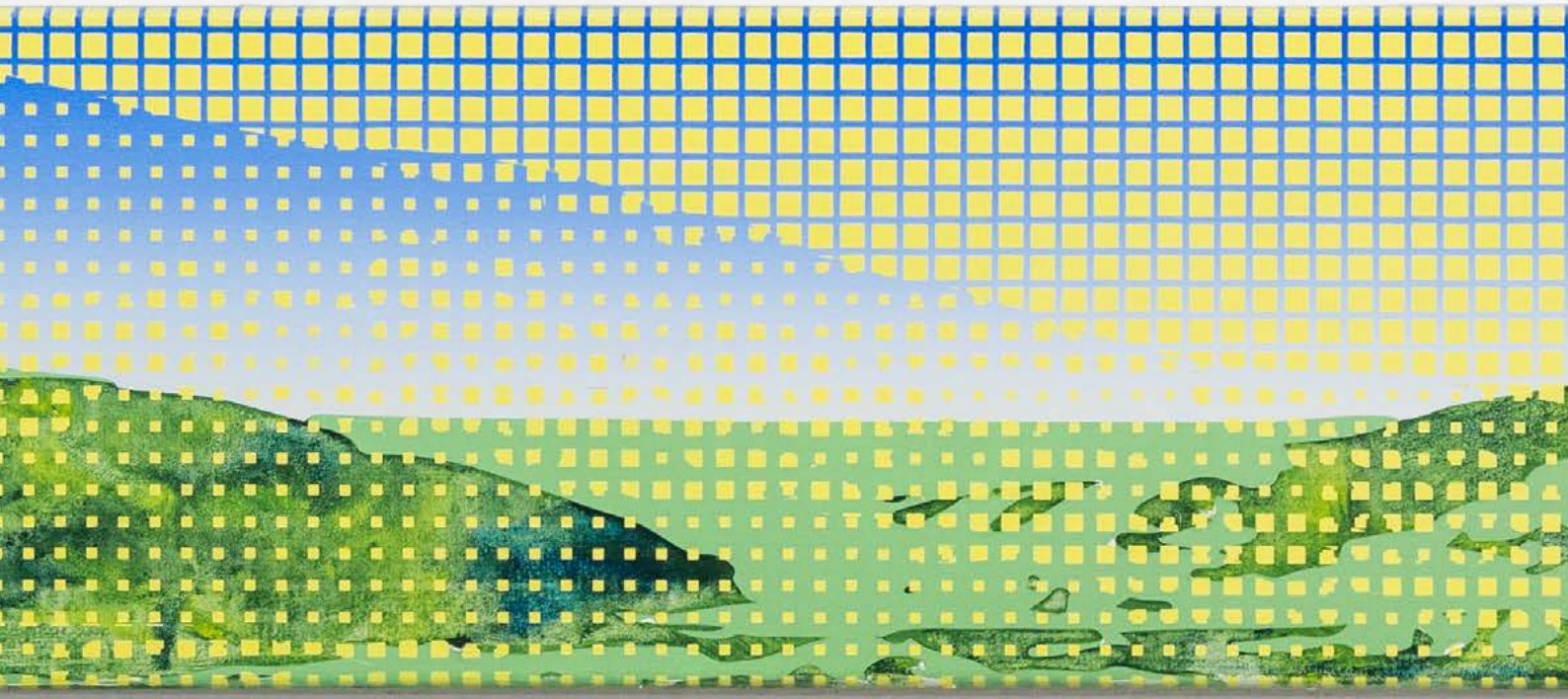
ISBN 978-2-8399-4850-0